



"Forty Thousand Dollars of Money That I Told and Schemed and Saved For Gave Into the Pockets of Loafing Thieves."



SYNOPSIS.

Abner Halliday, a miserly millionaire, is found gagged, bound and insensible in his room, his safe-still and \$60,000 missing. The thread of the story is taken up by his nephew Tom. Living in the same house are other relatives: reckless Bruce Halliday and pretty Clara Winton. Bruce, who is a bond broker, has been trying to raise \$10,000 to put through a deal and save himself from financial ruin. He has applied to his miserly uncle and to others for the loan but has been refused.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

"My God! My God! Forty thousand dollars of money that I told and schemed and saved for gave into the pockets of loafing thieves. And I was going to put it in the bank the first thing Monday morning. Oh, it's terrible—terrible!" He fell to rolling his head and cracking the joints of his fingers in his mental agony as the officers looked down upon him in mingled pity and contempt. Presently he recovered himself with a start and demanded to know about his papers; and this time I was glad to be able to tell him that so far as I had observed in my hasty scrutiny, nothing had been taken but the money. He seemed a trifle relieved for the moment at this information, but soon fell back into his lamentations. It was one of the most lamentable sights that I ever looked upon, exhibiting as it did all that was deplorable in his nature. The captain cleared his throat and began his examination.

"We have made a thorough inspection of the premises and cannot find that anything outside of the front rooms has been tampered with. All the windows of the unused lower portion are nailed down and the shutters fastened from the inside. The burglar alarm is in perfect order and would have notified the station had anything been forced open. The locks on the doors have not been broken, and they are of an intricate Yale pattern that could not have been picked. Everything goes to show that whoever entered did so by means of a key to the front door, since the rear door was bolted from the inside. If he did not unlock the front door it must have been left open, or else he was secreted in the house beforehand. He turned to Mrs. Tebbets. "Are you sure that everything was locked up last night when you retired and that no outsider was secreted anywhere?" She burst forth eagerly.

"And indeed I am, sir. I was downstairs all the evening, and if the front door had been open by so much as a crack I would have known it. I always notice such things. And there was not anybody in the house besides Mr. Halliday and myself, either. I swept the whole place yesterday afternoon, closets and all. If anybody had been under the beds my broom would have found him quick enough, the rogue." Noting these facts in his memorandum book the officer continued dogmatically:

"Then it comes down to this. Whoever did this must have done so by means of a key to the front door. The back door is still securely bolted from the inside, and your housekeeper says she has not had occasion to use it this morning. Therefore, it still remains as it was during the night. The lower windows are securely fastened; the upper ones could not have been raised sufficiently to admit a person without setting off the burglar alarm, and there are no other means of entrance. It could not have been done otherwise." There really seemed no

this manner when the front door bell rang sharply, and as Mrs. Tebbets was in the midst of her own trouble with my uncle, I went below to answer it. Swinging the door open I saw on the step before me my old friend, William LeDuc, whom I had not seen in ages. Heartily I grasped him by the hand, and dragged him within.

CHAPTER IV.

It is now necessary that I take one step backward in my relation of this mysterious occurrence. I must go back to some time before the commission of the burglary and the entry of LeDuc upon the scene, in order that you may have all the facts presented to you as they were to that detective when he took hold of the case. Having made this new start I think I can proceed chronologically to the end of the case, detailing events in the order in which they happened. I am now beginning a few months before the robbery.

It was at this period of my life that I was cast under a spell. Hopelessly, helplessly and blindly I fell in love with a woman whose beauty was so aggressive that no mortal man could ignore it, while to attempt to describe it would be almost to insult it. I was about twenty-five then and she possibly four years older. My acquaintance with her began through the irrepressible Bruce.

I had dropped into the blue room of the Imperial for a bottle of ale and a cigar after the theater, when I ran into my cousin's arms. He beamed upon me.

"Delighted, old fellow. Just in time. Come—I want to introduce you." He grasped my hand with the grip of a wrestler. Now, you have to exercise a little discretion before agreeing to meet Bruce's friends, and I glanced around furtively. You can never tell whether the next minute you will be shaking hands with the Chinese ambassador or the latest popular pugilist, so as the latter gentleman would express it, I sparred a moment for wind.

"To whom?" I inquired. He nodded toward a nearby table at which sat two women and a man.

"To Dick Edwards—but I guess you know him already—and the two ladies. But especially to Mrs. Dace. If you want good company, you need not go any further, for you won't find any better anywhere." I asked him whom the especial Mrs. Dace might be, and he laughed with what I thought was a faint undercurrent of significance beneath it.

"Oh, I haven't time to tell. Widow of somebody who died somehow, which is enough to know all at once. Main thing is she is as beautiful as a houri and gracious as an empress, but wise, my boy, wise, wise. Also apparently is a person of some means, amount of means represented by X, meaning unknown quantity; source of means problem in higher mathematics very difficult of solution. But remember this: If you begin to feel sentimental when you look at her, remember that life is only a joke and laugh at yourself; but when it comes to wine, remember that life is mighty serious proposition and stay sober. Come on now." In another moment he was introducing me.

"Mrs. Dace and Miss Lydton—Mr. Halliday. Cousin of mine through no fault of his, but nevertheless highly recommended by me. I believe you have met him, Dick, and will confirm me. Sorry I have to go, but he will fill my place and round out your party. Good night all," and he was gone.

I took my chair with a quick mental inventory of my new acquaintances. Miss Lydton was tall, waxy and good looking in an indolent blond way; Edwards was a prosperous looking man of about thirty-five; Mrs. Dace positively startling. From a purely physical standpoint her beauty was gorgeous. But so wonderfully complex was it that it could no more be analyzed by one glance than can a painted masterpiece. While its general effect was to cause a gasp of delight at first sight, when you looked again you saw that its perfection was the result of the exquisite blending of many tints into an incomparable whole. Never had I seen a mouth so bewitching, lips so rich or smile so dazzling. Her hair was changeable as an opal, her brows wonderfully arched, her eyes royal blue and bordered by long lashes that seemed to shimmer in shades deep forest pools. She was wonderful. Fascinated by her beauty for a moment I sat silently as she calmly surveyed me, one perfect hand idly toyed with a small gold purse that lay upon the table. Then far down in the sea depths of her blue eyes I saw faint amusement gathering and I drew myself together with a start. Edwards was explaining:

"You see, we had arranged for a theater party and there were to be four of us. Then at the last hour Mrs. Dace's escort became slightly indisposed and she came down alone and met Miss Lydton and myself. We are now about to have something to eat, and possibly a wee bit to drink. I happened to see your cousin Bruce and hailed him to join us, but it seems he has an excuse. Then he providentially happened to spy you and impressed you into his place to complete the party. So everybody is happy once more."

While I am no such gabbler as Bruce, I think I can hold my own in any fairly well regulated conversation. I rose to the occasion. The wine oiled my tongue and Mrs. Dace's little applauding laughs and nods of approval spurred my wit. Edwards seemed content to remain comparatively quiet; Miss Lydton was too indolent to care to do other than be entertained; Mrs. Dace was a sympathetic listener, and without effort I held the

floor. I had read considerably, and the pigeon holes of my memory were well stocked with the aphorisms of the sages. Through the simple effort of recollection I became philosopher, theologian, poet. To the soft patter of their applause I even soared to original heights. In the parlance of the stage, I made a hit. In fact when one o'clock came and with it the intimation from Mrs. Dace that she must depart, it was only after a little sigh that reached my ears alone, and a flash from her wonderful eyes that quickly hid themselves behind the screening lashes as I looked deep into them. Of the perpendicular bill I paid my half without pang, secretly philosophized by the knowledge that the gods won't allow us to be in their debt, and when man wines and dines with woman he must pay for it with the glistening jewels of his brow. We prepared to depart.

Edwards paved the way for me. "Mrs. Dace lives at the Arcadia, which is not more than a mile from your house. You can take her there, step back in your carriage and be home ten minutes later. Miss Lydton and I go in another direction, and leave you to your pleasant homeward ride. Of course we must all meet again. It will require another evening to talk this one over."

We bade them good night, and hailing a carriage, I assisted my companion into it. The rather long ride homeward still lingers in my mind as a pleasant dream. The gentle waying of the carriage as the rubber tires rolled noiselessly over the boulevard lulled us into half confidences. She told me quite a few things about herself. Her husband, an Englishman, had been in some diplomatic service in the Orient, had died a year before, and she had now come back to her birthplace on matters of business. Unreservedly, she seemed to accept me as a thorough man of the world, and even did me the flattery to repeat some of my witticisms of the evening and laugh over them for a moment the second time. When I say that I was charmed I think I have expressed it.

In front of the formidable entrance to the building where she resided I assisted her to alight, and she thrust out her fingers which I took eagerly. The physical contact thrilled me from head to toe and the enchantment of her smile enthralled me. "You have entertained me delightfully. I feel flattered to have met you," she murmured. "And since you are a busy man by day, I hope you will call and see me some evening when you can think of nothing else to do. You can reach me over the phone at almost any time. I hope you will not forget me."

That anyone once seeing her could ever forget her! Nothing could be more ridiculous than the thought. I lightly laughed the idea to scorn as I bent over her hand. "Mrs. Dace, the old Roman general reported to his emperor, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.' To you I must report somewhat differently. 'I came, I saw, I am conquered.' I will pay you my tributes very soon. Until then life will be a necessity instead of a pleasure."

She tripped up the entrance steps and from their top sent me a flutter of her handkerchief and a flashing smile that made my blood leap as she vanished behind the heavy door. Back into the carriage I climbed and went home in an exhilaration of spirits that the wine did not account for. The seine had been cast and was being held wide to receive. Unsuspectingly the fish wiggled on.

The next day I happened to see Bruce. In the course of our conversation I casually asked him what he knew of my companion of the night before, and he began digging his fingers into his head as though trying to scratch out an answer. Presently it came:

"Let's see. I don't know that I can tell you very much—you know I never paid any particular attention to her," he began in a quizzical glance at me. "Still, if you will agree to keep it a family secret, I might remember a few things. Promise, honest Injun?"

"Well, then, here goes. Mattie Madden was born in this town about thirty years ago of poor but dishonest parents. But she was a beauty, even as a girl, and people forgave her parentage on that account. She eloped out of school with a more or less account Englishman named Dace, who afterwards got into the service of his government over in India or some other outlandish place on the back of the map. He died with his boots on."

"How was he killed?" I inquired. Bruce grew a trifle more serious.

"Well, now, that is something I am no authority upon. I can only repeat to you in confidence what I have heard and read. But the report has it that it happened in a disagreement with a Russian nobleman over her—one of those cheerful little affairs that sometimes occur out that way, you know; and secondly to the front; wine and jealousy in the background; moon in the distance—you understand. Anyway it made a ripping good story for the journals. Next thing I heard of her she was back here. I hope you are not going to make a fool of yourself over her."

His general tone had slightly irritated me, but the last remark positively nettled. "No; I think one in the family is enough," I retorted. But he slipped the thrust aside in his usual smooth way, laughing.

"I guess that's right. Come to think of it, I never did know you to make a fool of yourself over anything. That does seem to be my specialty, doesn't it? But while I give you credit for having a better balanced head than I have, I'll tell you what I do in certain cases. When I get up

against a proposition like cocaine in wine, or a woman like Mrs. Dace, I run for the fence. They are too damned seductive to fool with and I don't take any chances with them. She has got the beauty and graces of all the mythological goddesses combined, but that does not count for everything. If I remember rightly, those mythological goddesses were a pretty bad lot."

With the instinctive desire that Clare had possessed to fly to his defense, I now felt myself surging to Mrs. Dace's. But I held myself in leash. "Even assuming for the sake of argument that I should desire to make a fool of myself over her, what possible object could she have in encouraging me to such idiocy?" I asked. He puckered up his mouth and thrust his hands deep in his pockets.

"Well, now, that is one of the funny things about women. Of course we don't know much about them, but we do know this: We know that the only reason they care for us is because they can't get anything better. If the gods came to earth, the only thing left for man to do would be to cast himself like swine into the sea. And therein is where we differ from woman-kind. Man doesn't want angels; plain mortal woman—provided she is not too plain, of course—is good enough for him. But inasmuch as she can't achieve the gods, on this earth at least, she turns to man as the next best substitute. Now you are a strapping young fellow, good looking and all that, and such men have always interested women from the beginning. But remember, there are women and women. Take Clare, for instance. She is beautiful, too, and keeps herself looking as attractive as possible in order to make people like her. Yet she is as harmless as a butterfly. Some others aren't. You ought to know something of the species before you pick up a thing just because it is gaudy. You might get stung."

Absolutely without information concerning her beyond what Bruce himself had confided in me, half angry at myself that I should take the trouble to answer him, I nevertheless yielded to my impulse to defend her. With considerable emphasis I told him that I should refuse to believe any in-

means unknown to me escaped the cell that he ought to guard," he shot over his shoulder as he turned away.

"Thank you ever so much," I retorted.

CHAPTER V.

The love of a man for a woman is a strange disease. Its methods of attacking its victims are varied; its effects manifold. It may be spasmodic or insidious, acute or chronic, violent as the toothache or unsuspected as a slow fever. Its subjects may be melancholic, exhilarated, tormented, soothed or affected in any one of a dozen other different ways. In my case, to start with, it was both insidious and exhilarating. I was somewhat like a man who has been shot through some soft part by a modern high-power rifle. He perhaps does not feel it at the time and may run on for a considerable distance before a sharp pang notifies him that he is badly hit indeed. Then he sits down in considerable astonishment and wonders just when he got it. I had felt no shock as yet, and had no doubt of my ability to run out of danger at any time. I made an engagement to call upon Mrs. Dace, and then dressed myself with particularity as to details. That done, I squared myself before the mirror for a view of the general effect.

I could not help but feel that Bruce had spoken only the truth regarding my personal appearance. I am six feet tall, and when I was in college was a scintillating athletic star of the first magnitude. Nor do I believe that I am any valier than the average man, but if any woman whom I happened to be with was ever displeased with my physical personage, I never became aware of it. Mrs. Dace had evidently approved of it, for she paid me the round-about compliment of confessing in a general way her admiration of tall, well-set-up men. Assuring myself by a last sweeping glance in the glass that I could do nothing more to improve my toilet, I departed.

The Arcadia was one of the modern palace apartments that are springing up so magically in our greater cities.



"I Hope You Will Not Forget Me."

situations against her until I had positive knowledge of their truth. He listened silently, growing suddenly sober at my warmth, and when I had finished addressed me with a mollifying pat upon the back.

"Whew! I didn't think you were going to get so warmed up over a little thing like that. But you may be sure I have no desire to disparage your lady. I told you to start with that I knew almost nothing about her except by hearsay, and you know as well as I do what that sort of evidence is worth. They won't listen to it in law. She may be pure gold for all I know; but I was just warning you to keep your guard up until you have fainted her out. But now I'll tell you something which I do know to be a fact. If you expect to hold a princess, you have got to be a prince of good fellows yourself and go out and buy her a new castle every few days. Furthermore, in this case, you are going to run up against a real dragon." I smiled.

"Dragons always get the worst of it in the story books; fire, smoke and all," I returned with a touch of sarcasm. But Bruce seemed very much in earnest.

"Well, you won't find this one any fairy tale beast that you can chop up with a tin sword. He is an up-to-date, high-gear, sixty-horse power, mile-a-minute juggernaut, and you had better keep out of his way or you'll get smashed."

"And the dragon is who?" "Richard Mackay, boodier prince and political boss who was indicted by the grand jury in connection with that thirty-million dollar franchise grab from the city; and who by some

its entrance was castle like; its outer court a bower; its walls glistening marble. Its height was great and its general effect imposing. There were private garages on each floor for the cars of its tenants. I went in at the entrance where I had left her, took the elevator to the fifth floor and rang the bell of her suite. The door was opened by an inscrutable-faced mulatto maid who surveyed me with and down with a quick keenness that made me feel that she would never forget me. I inquired for her mistress and was immediately shown into a handsomely furnished reception parlor. Promptly Mrs. Dace came floating from between the portieres.

I viewed her with refreshed admiration. Her gown though of angelic simplicity was yet a triumph of artfulness. The cunning of a master hand was revealed in each smooth curve and the delicate tracery of lace-work through which the white flesh gleamed. Her figure was exquisite, and seemed to have been molded within this creation of a genius. She approached me with hand extended, her smile a witching thing.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Drawback.

"I should think it would be bad for the succession of a kingdom to have a bald-headed ruler."

"Why so?"

"Because he has no heir apparent."

Their Class.

"What would you call authors on aviation?"

"Well, unless they go up in aeroplanes of literature, I should class them as underwriters."

Tree Made Lot Valuable.

"Not long ago," says Fred A. Manchester, one of Cleveland's best known real estate men, "I had an assignment to sell a certain number of lots in a new Cleveland allotment."

"In this allotment there was exactly one tree. The lots ranged in price from \$250 to \$400, but for the lot on which was located this particular tree the price was \$500. And do you know that this one little tree made this one little lot more valuable by far than any of the rest? Folks would hesitate about paying \$250 for a pretty little lot on a side street, but nobody objected when asked to pay \$500 for this lot away out of the ordinary run of travel, simply because there was a big shade tree in the backyard."—Cleveland Leader.

Pleasant Place.

A local painter spent three months on a painting. He spent a good deal of money on models, but the finished product justified all his expenditures and all his time. Everybody told him so, when his picture was exhibited. Everybody but one. The lady whose opinion he valued most was the one he took to the exhibition with him. "I can hardly wait," she bubbled. "Which is your picture?" "This one," he told her—and waited. She studied it critically. "What is it called?" she wanted to know. "Wood Nymphs." "How silly of me to ask! They're so natural. Why, anybody would think they were really made of wood!"—Cleveland Plain-Dealer.

Foxes Made Bold by Hunger.

Foxes seem to be unusually plentiful in the Blackmore vale this year, and several instances of their remarkable boldness have occurred of late. A few days ago Reynard had the hardihood actually to pay a visit to the kennels at Charlton Horethorne, a village in a sheltered hollow, in broad daylight, between the Sherborne and Wincanton, and carry off a much prized cock belonging to the huntsman. Apparently the marauder had been lying in a hedgerow close to the poultry yard and his tracks were easily traced in the muddy lane by which he safely beat his retreat with his capture.—London Standard.

Maine Nature Fakers.

Maine is a great state for "nature fakers." The Kennebec Journal puts out the following: "Obed F. Stackpole of Bladeford discovered on entering his henhouse a few mornings ago that a fine black hen of his flock had committed suicide. He found the hen hanging suspended by her neck, and her head slipped through a loop in a cord, which was attached overhead in the center of the coop. The cord which figured in the event was one by means of which Mr. Stackpole had previously suspended a cabbage just above the floor and a small loop was left in the end to which the stump of the cabbage had been fastened."

Many Children Are Sickly.

Mother Gray's Sweet Powder, for Children Break up Colds in 24 hours, relieve Feverishness, Headache, Stomach Troubles, Teething Disorders, more and regulate the bowels, and destroy Worms. They are so pleasant to take children like them. Send for sample free. Address, A. S. Olmsted, Lefroy, N.Y.

Pericles wore his hair pretty close to his eyes—but nobody ever called him a low-brow!

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